

Queen not allowed to sail after NYE incident

By Kathryn Reed

While the Tahoe Queen did not sustain any damage during a mishap New Year's Eve, it is still grounded by the U.S. Coast Guard.

During an inspection on Jan. 1, Coast Guard investigators from San Francisco found an unrelated mechanical problem that is keeping the paddle-wheeler docked. USCG Ensign Jake Urrutia called it an "unrelated deficiency", but had no more details.

"I don't know how long that will take before that is lifted," Urrutia told *Lake Tahoe News* of the "no sail" edict.

There are conflicting reports as to whether the boat with more than 200 passengers hit a sandbar or winds disabled it during the annual New Year's Eve cruise. Urrutia said that is what investigators are trying to determine. He told *Lake Tahoe News* on Friday morning that investigators don't know why the Queen required the assistance of a tugboat.

At 1:29am Jan. 1 Christi Murphy tweeted this from the boat, "Stuck in the middle of Lake Tahoe on the queen tahoe... Jerks keep lying to us. Boat is stuck in 5 ft deep water with 200 people+kids. Suck."

Coasties were not notified of the incident until about 2:30am Jan. 1, and by that time the vessel was no longer disabled.

Multiple calls to Victor Gomez, tour manager of Aramark's operations on the South Shore, went unreturned. Aramark runs the Queen as well as the M.S. Dixie II, Zephyr Cove Lodge and other operations. Dave Freireich, with corporate offices, also was not available.

With the Queen out of service indefinitely, it means there is no paddle-wheeler operating on the South Shore. This is because the Dixie is undergoing \$1 million worth of renovations and is not expected to be plying the waters of Lake Tahoe until the spring.

The Queen hit a sandbar near Regan Beach on Aug. 4, which necessitated the 257 passengers be ferried to shore by much small vessels. No one was injured in either incident. The August incident is still under investigation by the Coast Guard.